(d) the efforts made to increase agricultural exports to different countries; and

the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Agricultural products are mainly exported to the USA, Canda, Germany, France, UK, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

(b) The total value of exports of agricultural and allied products (excluding coffee, tea, raw cotton and marine products during the last three years have been as follows:

Year	Value (In Rs. Crores)
1992-93	5686.81
1993-94	7532.99
1994-95	7049.05

(Source: DGCI&S, Caluctta)

(c) The decline in export during 1994-95 was mainly due to reduced import of basmati rice by Saudi Arabia on account of large carryover stocks, diminished purchase of tobacco by Russia and decline in oilmeal exports on account of reduction of domestic soyabean crop.

(b) and (e) Steps taken to enhance export of agricultural products include simplification of inspection procedures, removal of Minimum Expoprt Price and quuantity restrictions on selected items, provision of concessional credit, product development to meet international needs, extention of benefits available under the scheme of EOUs/EPZs to agriculture sector and permitting 50% sale in the domestic tariff area, free import of raw cashewnuts for augmenting domestic supply, suspension of 2% export cess upto 31.3.96 on export of pepper, support @ Rs. 20/- per kg. for meeting most of export of 600 MTs of cardamom exported by air in consumer packs to middle East destinations between 1.12.95 to 31.12.95, support to cardamom exporters @ Rs. 35 per kg. for export of 600 MTs of cardamom during the period 1.12.95 to meet the export development cost, suspension of 2% export cess of cardamom upto 31.3.96, air freight subsidy on export of specified permissible products to specified destinations, provision of cold stores at airporets.

Demand to Ban Tobacco Trade

2131. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Experts urge India to ban tobacco trade" as reported in Statesman dated 7th November, 1995;

(b) if so, whether there has been a persistent demand to ban tobacco trade; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Representations have been received for restricting tobacco trade. Ministry of Health has set up an Export Committee to undertake a comparative study on the economics of tobacco use; inter alia examining the tax revenue and foreign exchange earnings; employment and consumer expenditure on the one hand and the cost of tertiary level medical care facilities for treatment of tobacco related diseases; losses due to fire-hazard; ecological damage due to deforestation and disposal of tobacco related waste with a view to study the economic impact of tobacco consumption.